

The Omen

Vol. 40, Issue 5



print: z
print: r
print: **CHEESE CLUB STAFF:**

print: y
print: s
print: q
print: y
print: p F. Stewart-Taylor - Cheese Prime

print: p
print: o Grace Willey - Dry Cereal
print: o

print: o
print: s B Corfman - Pagemastress
print: y

print: q Jesse Ide - Omega Jesse
print: o

print: s Jonathan Gardner - Slutsky
print:

w
print: u Stephen Morton - Old & Creepy (his own words)
print: l

print: s Julia Jacobs - 90s Veganzz
print: k

print: r
print: u Joseph Dromboski - Pineapple
print: q

print: v Rachel Ithen - Mushrooms
print: x

print: x Josh (rachels friend Ae) - Pesto Pizza
print: j

print: k Britt (ravhels friend Bee)- Julia Prime
print: t

print: y
print: j

print: l
print: n

print: j
print:

m
print: x

print: y
print: q

print:
m

print: v
print: p

print: s
print: p

print: h
print: p

print: v
print: p

print: q
print:

m

Submissions are due always, constantly, so submit forever. You can submit in rich text or plain text format by CD, Flash Drive, singing telegram, carrier pigeon, paper airplane, Fed-Ex, Pony Express, or email. Get your submissions to omen@hampshire.edu or F. Stewart-Taylor, box 1092

POLICY

The Omen is a biweekly publication that is the world's only example of the consistent application of a straightforward policy: we publish all signed submissions from members of the Hampshire community that are not libelous. Send us your impassioned yet poorly-thought-out rants, self-insertion fan fiction, MS Paint comics, and whiny emo poetry: we'll publish it all, and we're happy to do it. The Omen is about giving you a voice, no matter how little you deserve it. Since its founding in December of 1992 by Stephanie Cole, the Omen has hardly ever missed an issue, making it Hampshire's longest-running publication.

Your Omen submission (you're submitting right now, right?) might not be edited, and we can't promise any spellchecking either, so any horrendous mistakes are your fault, not ours. We do promise not to insert comical spelling mistakes in submissions to make you look foolish. Your submission must include your real name: an open forum comes with a responsibility to take ownership of your views. (Note: Views expressed in the Omen do not necessarily reflect the views of the Omen editor, the Omen staff, or anyone, anywhere, living or dead.)

The Omen staff consists of whoever shows up for Omen layout, which usually takes place on alternate Thursday nights in the basement of Merrill on a computer with an extremely inadequate monitor. You should come. We don't bite. You can find the Omen on other Thursdays in Saga, the post office, or on the door of your mod.

THE OFFICIAL OMEN HAIKU:

Views in the Omen (5)

Do not necessarily (7)

Reflect the staff's views (5)

EDITORIAL: I RAGEQUIT CARING ABOUT "ALLIES" (AND SO CAN YOU)

OR: DIE SANE SCUM: A CRAZY MANIFESTO

F. Stewart-Taylor

Res Life, damn their eyes, is doing a panel on mental health, featuring, for reasons beyond the ken of your humble reporter, Active Minds, along with a member of the health services counseling staff, which is like having a polar bear and an elephant seal report on the status of certain species of fish. GREAT THANKS, THAT SERVES OUR FUCKING INTERESTS. Two groups of peeps who take their existence from the fact that we crazies need advocacy, but which fail to talk to any of the crazies in question about what we want. Everybody has mental health- let's talk about it!? No. Let's not. I don't really care that you're sad sometimes, so you totally understand what it's like to be depressed. I don't care! I don't care how empathetic you are!

Why is anyone even remotely interested in focusing the conversation on mental health activism on people without mental illnesses? I don't give a shit what sane scum think of me at this point. If some neurtypical asshole is uncomfortable hearing about a person with a mood disorder's experience with depression or a person with an anxiety disorder's problems leaving their house or showering, or a person with an eating disorder's struggles in or out of recovery, who gives a shit? Yeah, they shouldn't be allowed to make our lives shitty because of that. But honestly as long as they shut their idiot faces I don't care if it's because we've hand-held them until they understand that crazy people are just like you but sadder.

Aside from letting me objectify that one dude who works for counseling services who has great taste in cardigans and looks like he conditions, the last res-live active minds joint process didn't do shit for me. Actually, just kidding, my roommate and I totally stole their hummus platter and baby carrots after my disastrous attempts to get them to accept the idea that health services ought to reflect the needs, and therefore the input, of those affected by their services, aka, us crazy peeps. And, by the way? That's OUR word. Your crazy ex-girlfriend? Probably isn't, and even if she is? Step off. Thrice now I've had counseling services staff look at me like I am crazy for suggesting that my bipolar ass have a seat at the table to discuss health services at large, particularly my own.

Rather than focusing our activism on nurturing sane scum until they know it's okay to ask if you're okay, let's empower with mental illnesses to know that we are smart, important, brave, brilliant, and beautiful, that we can take care of ourselves, and we deserve the help we need to do so.

The way to do this isn't back to childhood events, because my back to childhood event would be climbing into a treehouse and wondering if I was going to jump (age 9) or listening to my brother cry from where he was locked inside the dog kennel because that's what it's like in an institution? (age 10) or being told my siblings and I could end up like the homeless dude jerking off on the side of the road if we didn't get our grades up (age 12.) Compared to lots of people with PTSD, my childhood was a cakewalk. But I sure as fuck don't want to talk about destressing in the context of childhood. Fuck that noise, being a real genuine adult who can keep a house from smelling like dogshit all year round is an amazing destressor. Sure, we had juiceboxes and coloring pages, but these events never think to include the soundtrack of screaming about the mortgage in the background, so it seems to lack veritas.

The way to do this isn't posters in the bridge for eating disorder awareness week which remind you that some people have to deal with the outright impossibility of eating, because wow, yeah, oh god food IS the worst, thanks for fucking reminding me, jackass. Being around a bunch of people eating wasn't doing that enough already. Preesh, assholes. Thank fuck the lawn full of dead people's backpacks with their faces hasn't show up (hahaha fuck you active minds) because I would bury them and give us all back our dignity. As if existing as a mentally ill individual isn't shitty enough without fucking gimmicky bullshit by self-proclaimed allies. As if persons with eating disorders really looked at a barbie doll and were all 'oh, I could do that!' as if it were a project on the home improvement channel. Glad you fixed that by showing us how weird a six foot barbie would look, National Organization of Active Minds! You're champions.

And god fucking forbid you actually go to health services with your fucking problems, because then you get sent to have an assessment to have a referral to have an assessment to get your ass over to UMass where the actually competent clinicians will prescribe you the meds you need to stop crying every time you're left alone for five minutes, but only after an intern with a bad haircut tells you it might be for the best if you accept that you're never going to be happy again. That intern is the best you can get, though, because everyone else is booked solid except once a month at 9am, which is prohibitive if you live off campus, and the smug, sleeping looking white man who yawned through the counseling services meet and greet doesn't like to advertise emergency sessions because then someone might use them. So, fine. Organize a drop in group for people who just don't know how to do their laundry without their mommy dearest and thus need a little help, or have the Unthinkable Lori Clown on call for hall adjustment fuckery. Or, here's an idea, have interns earn their keep dealing with that shit, and save the appointments for people who need them. Once we stop letting sane scum tell depressos that our problems aren't real, and once genuine mentally ill peer to mentally ill peer education is in place to fight against the idea imposed by illness and society that depression and mental illness are trivial and unworthy of help, we won't need the 'no problem too small' approach, then we can give a shit about how sane scum feels about having to deal with our problems.

So until we create a conclusive mental health programme on this campus which includes mentally ill peeps as fully equal participants, I'm going to go live in a series of deep and interconnected pits, somewhere warm and uninhabited. My pits are gonna be full of printed copies of Boggle the Owl's reassuring words of wisdom, electric blankets to cuddle under with the feral cats I'm adopting, and bear traps. If any sane sum falls into the bear trap, we leave them for the cats. Love may be greater than stigma, but my bear traps would love nothing more than to sink into your sane legmeats, jackasses.

-F. Stewz

Section: Speak

print: uA letter to the Omen layout staff

print: uGreg Larsen

print: nIf you want to give everyone a voice, fine. If you want to preface
print: earticles with trigger warnings, that's fine and reasonable. And if you
print: iwant to exercise editorial power to write articles with
print: fcounterarguments against the people who you disagree with as you're compiling an issue, that's fine too - it's your publication!
print: karticles in a straightforward, legible fashion. Nathan Anecone's
print: loriginal article about Rimbaud was printed in small text with the
print: pfirst words of many lines cut off. It was technically possible to plod
print: dthrough what he said by guessing what those words were. However, there was no reason why you couldn't have just formatted it more
print: iforming
print: lforming
print: hforming
print: cforming
print: man opinion on his work.

print: oI was disappointed, then, to see that Anecone's response had formatting quirks of its own in the most recent issue.
print: ganyone a service to make his sentiments harder to read and analyze.
print: lSpecifically, while Anecone's response was printed on the left pages,
print: ha different piece by Jesse Ide was printed on the right pages across
print: pa different piece by Jesse Ide was printed on the right pages across
print: ffrom Anecone's. Ide's piece appears to be a re-imagining/scrambled
print: cversion of Anecone's letter, so the two blend into each other very
print: keasily. While, again, it is technically possible to discern between
print: pthe two, it's far more difficult than it ought to be. All the other
print: rarticles in this last issue were presented sequentially and without
print: rinterruption in a unique font. I don't see any reason why Anecone's
print: qand Ide's pieces had to have been treated any differently than the
print: lothers. The two articles could have been printed one after the other.
print: eAlternately, if the layout staff was set upon printing one page of
print: beach piece at a time, they could have reprinted the little line down
print: jthe middle of each of the pages as the articles went on, used
print: odifferent fonts for the two articles, and printed footnotes indicating
print: dwhich article was which (for example, ?ctd. on page 8?).

print: eMy concerns about hard-to-read articles aren't rooted in fears about the Stalinist suppression of ideas or the belief in an insidious and
print: mtopics. For example, in a relatively recent issue, six or seven reader-submitted poems were cut up and published in a jumble that was
print: nhave to say and make up my own mind. Speaking from that position, I have one request of you: please do everything within your power
print: e- Greg Larsen

However, I think it's in line with the Omen's stated policy to print all

clearly so the readers could take what members of the staff said about what he said as well as what he actually said into consideration when

While I don't agree with the majority of Anecone's arguments, I don't think it does

specific plot to destroy Anecone's character. In fact, I've noticed problems like this in the past with submissions involving entirely benign needlessly difficult to navigate and comprehend. I'm just an interested reader who wants to hear what people in the Hampshire community as publishers to ensure that an article's formatting doesn't make it difficult to read.

print: g

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

No, Seriously, We Need All Gender Bathrooms

Jesse Ide

So when I meet people, the introductions usually go like this.

Me: "Hi, I'm Jesse"

Person: "Hi, I'm Person"

Me: "What pronouns do you use?"

Person: "Huh? What? Pronoun? Uh. . . (He/She)?"

Me: "Great, I use they, she, and he"

I give all those pronouns because if I say "any" they'll probably use he for me, which on some days I don't mind but other days it really bothers me if everyone is using that pronoun. By putting it at the end, it is de-emphasized. The truth is that what pronouns I'm comfortable with change by the day, because my gender is confusing and possibly fluid, and it would be unfair of me to expect people to ask for new ones every single day. So I give all the ones I use and forgive people for using one I don't really want that day. I don't identify as trans, because I'm not undergoing transition, but I'm definitely not a cis man.

Normally, I don't have a problem with bathrooms. On days when I feel like a guy, I'm fine with using Self-Identified Men bathrooms, and on other days I normally can find an all-gender bathroom. The only place I usually am without them is in Saga, wherein I can walk to Dakin and find my own bathroom.

The other place is the Red Barn, and that's a problem.

So here's the story, on Wednesday, I decided to go the Contra Dancing event in the Red Barn. I'd never gone before but I wanted to. That particular day was a day when I was feeling very much like a lady. I put on pink nail polish and makeup, and when I met someone I introduced myself with only They and She pronouns.

I showed up to Contra Dancing, and attended the beginner's workshop at the beginning. The facilitator emphasized that although in Contra dancing the two roles are called "Lady" and "Gent" that they're just dancing roles and that it's super common for anyone to be any role. That made me feel more comfortable, though I did still

want to take the "lady" role because I was new and the lady role follows while the gent role leads. I also just wanted it because I was feeling like a lady.

At the beginning, a guy I didn't know approached me and asked me to be his dance partner for the next dance, asking if I'd take the lady role, I happily obliged. I had a lot of fun with that first dance, it was really great. Just a few times, I was asked "Wait, you're the lady?" but normally people saw that my gent was a large hairy man and did not question that I was the lady. Also, that first dance was earlier and seemed to be more Hampshire people.

The next dance, I decided to dance with a friend of mine. They were wearing a dress. I took the lady role because they're more experienced. We had difficulty learning the dance which caused some confusing, but what I think caused most confusing was that as we moved up to the next set of partners in the line, every single person said "You're the lady?!" and a good chunk of them would pushed me aside onto the side of the line for gents and pull my dance partner over. We kept trying to switch back only be switched again.

By the end of the line I wasn't having a very good time, the confusion over whether I was dancing as a lady or a gent at any time made it very hard to know the dance, and I apologized to my partner and said that I wanted to drop out of that dance and calm down. I was really stressed and anxious and decided to go downstairs and get some water.

I head downstairs, and I see the "self-identified men's room" and think that no, fuck no am I going to into that room and declare myself as self-identifying as a man. Unfortunately, the only other option is the self-identified women's room. I know that those rooms exist to have a safe space for women to use the bathroom without the presence of men, so I usually don't use them because while I'm not a man I do get perceived as one so it would have the same effect. However, I really needed to get water and calm down so with some hesitation I entered the self-identified women's room. It seemed to be empty, I turned on the cold faucet, drank from my cupped hands, and splashed my face with cold water. Then, someone exits one of the stalls. She sees me and gets very upset, asking me what I'm doing in the lady's room. I try to explain that I sort-of identify as a lady and that since there was no all-gender bathroom nearby that I didn't have a choice but the person isn't hearing any of it and pushes me out of the bathroom.

Now, that person, from their age, clearly wasn't a Hampshire student, but not everyone in all of our bathrooms are Hampshire students. The stress that was added from that person on top of what I was feeling just put me in too bad a mood that there was no way I could go back and continue Contra dancing, especially if my "lady" status was going to get questioned again.

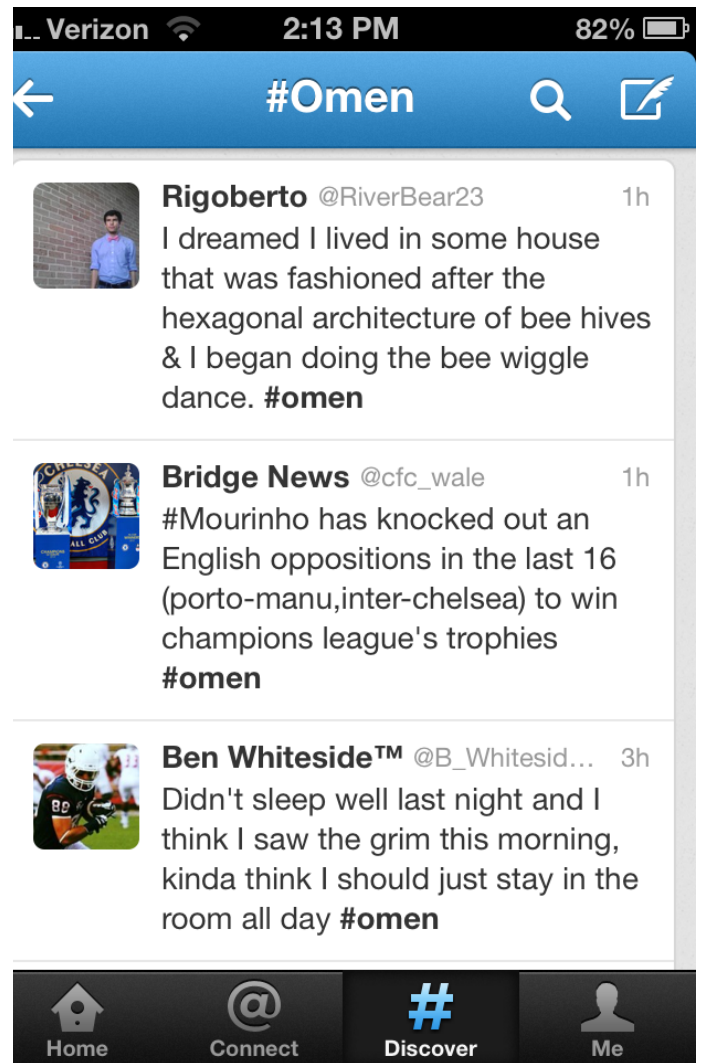
So just in order to use a fucking bathroom, I had to walk all the way back to the library and give up on Contra dancing for the night. I still really want to go again sometime, that first dance was really fun, but I don't feel comfortable trying again somewhere without an all-gender bathroom.

The thing is, all-gender bathrooms don't only exist for convenience, they exist for the same reasons that women's bathrooms exist. Not having any all-gender bathrooms in a building causes the same effect to non-binary identified people and many trans-identified people that not having any women's bathrooms in a building does to cis women. Even if I fully identified as a lady, if I didn't manage to pass (which with my body-type and haircut I probably wouldn't) then that experience of being pushed out of the bathroom still would have happened.

So, yes, we really fucking need all gender bathrooms in every building. It's not okay to "just have a few exceptions" like Saga and the Red Barn. It's okay to have some gendered bathrooms, I fully recognized the need for gendered bathrooms for women and I'll even accept the argument that some elderly men have their dignity hurt when they can't use a men's room, but every building with bathrooms needs to have at the minimum a single all-gender bathroom too!

Yes, it will cost money and be difficult to do, but to not do it is oppression of all non-cis folk at this college. It forces non-binary people to walk 10m across campus just to use a bathroom and in high-stress situations when you just really fucking need to get to a bathroom and calm down, it only causes more stress.

I think I'm gonna try and find a dress that fits me at Goodwill so next time I go Contra Dancing people won't insist on misgendering me. The fact that that's necessary is awful, but oh well. Not the worst gender-related experience I've had on this campus.



An Open Letter to Organizers of Latin@ Event at UMass

Xavier A. Torres de Janon

Date: March 10, 2013

Sent to: UMass Latin American Cultural Center, UMass Latinos Unidos, UMass S.A.M.B.A.

Good day,

I am writing to express my deep disappointment and concern for incidents that happened on March 8, in the Noche Latina event.

It is unacceptable that police officers had to intervene to forbid entrance to people, people who are proud Latin@ students. People who this event was supposed to celebrate. I understand that doors had to close at 11:30PM. But it is not an excuse to employ such means. Close friends of mine, active Latin@s of the 5 College Consortium, were aggressively denied entrance because they were 3 minutes late. It is appalling that Latin@s, already oppressed by authority in this country, had to encounter such an event this night.

As a signer (chair) for Raíces, the Latin@ group of Hampshire College, I am outraged by what happened. Whatever the case may be, white police men forcing Latin@s out of an event is unacceptable, contradictory to what we are supposed to be advocating for, and, honestly, an embarrassment. I enjoyed the night, the message that was portrayed and the beautiful people organizing and participating in it. But I leave with a bitter taste after finding out about these incidents.

I hope a public apology, scrutiny of what happened and an immediate response take place.

Thank you very much,
Xavier A. Torres de Janon

Trigger Warning: The following piece contains descriptions of blood and pus.

-Jonathan Gardner

Health and EMTs at Hampshire: A Frustrating Encounter

Xavier A. Torres de Janon

Saturday morning, and I woke up with an infected middle finger on my left hand. I could feel it pulsing and it was swollen, but the pain was bearable. As the day goes by, my finger swells more and a pus bubble can be seen on it. The pain was suffocating. So at 5PM, I go to my hall and announce that we are going to pop it and drain it all to heal my finger.

In an improvised medical procedure in our F3 bathroom involving swabs of cotton, antiseptic alcohol, a sewing needle, 1 friend in charge of stabbing and opening the bubble, another one attending to keep my hand still, and another one for support and guidance, we jab my finger and start squeezing. Blood and pus start draining out, and after 3 additional stabs, it all seemed to go well. Then, I start passing out.

My hallmates try to shake me off from passing out, but I can't: I start losing my hearing ability and eyesight. I start gagging, and the hallmate keeping my hand still grabs bags so that I can throw up in. So I decide that we should call the EMTs. In a couple of minutes, one arrives and consoles me as she waits for her partner.

When her partner, with a Campus Police officer, arrives, they start taking my blood pressure and doing standard checking procedures. By this time, I am regaining consciousness and strength (I have passed out a lot in my life, and from experience, it's just a matter of eating something sweet and waiting for it to pass). So the EMT tells me that I should visit Health Services or call an ambulance.

I ask: "Health Services here? Today?"

EMT: "No, they're closed today at Hampshire. You would go on Monday. But you can also go to UMass Health Services or the hospital."

Then the EMT and the police officer give me all these options: take a taxi to a health center (money taken from my student account), call an ambulance (God knows how much money that would involve), wait for Monday (... ..), or ask a friend with a car to take me to UMass/the hospital. I say that what I have is not anything serious. It's only a matter of an infected finger and me passing out.

So I ask the EMT: "Can you please help me squeezing the pus out, or assisting me in doing so?"

EMT: "Sorry, I can't, I can call an ambulance for you."

Me: "Can I then request that you stay here and monitor the situation while I continue to squeeze it all out?"

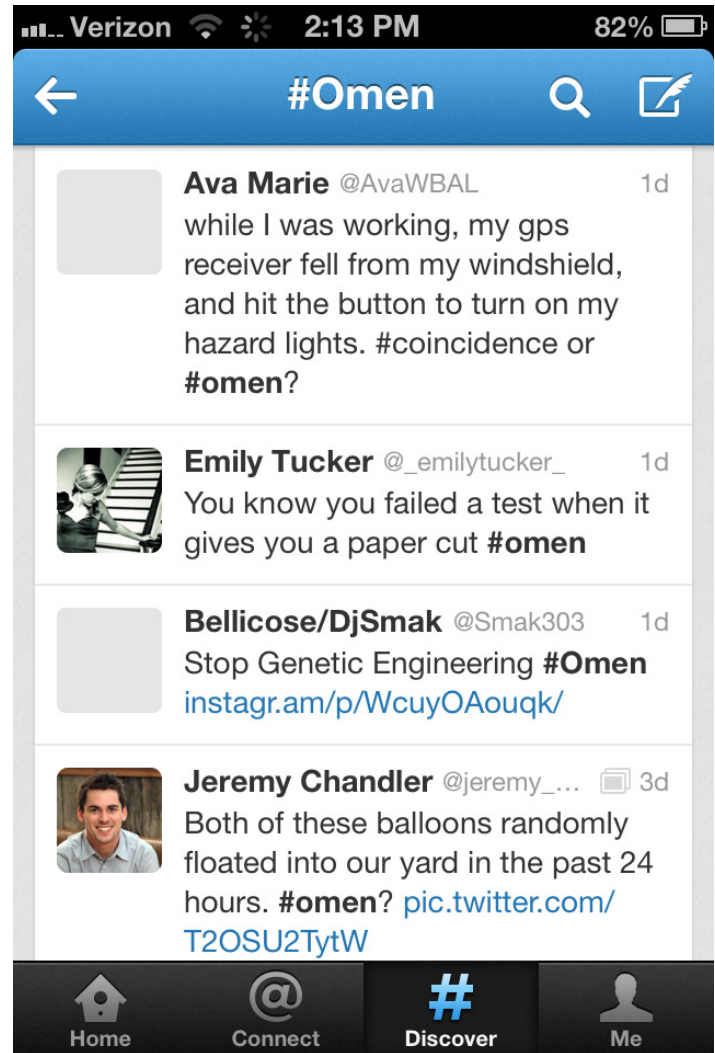
EMT: "No, sorry, I can't. You should clean it up and cover it up, and go to a health center."

Additional age/name questions, I squeeze my finger one last time, and my hallmate proceeds to clean it and cover it up.

I understand that EMTs work under rules. It was not the EMT's fault that he could not further help me. He would have probably lost his job (and perhaps even career) if something went wrong and the infection got worse. I would have had no problem signing a waiver or consent form agreeing to take all the responsibilities of my infection. But this is not the procedure.

The fact that I am typing this with a still swollen finger and a bitter memory of limited medical choices on campus on a Saturday afternoon is frustrating. I know very well the appalling monetary state of our college and its limitations with restructuring health services, but I felt abandoned today. I merely asked for the EMTs to stay just in case. This was impossible for them to do. What if I refused to sign the form that granted them immunity from the fact that I did not agree to go to a hospital/call an ambulance? I wonder if they would have dragged me out or wrote somewhere that I was being "uncooperative". Anyhow, that's my story. Take what you want from it.

Thanks so much,
Xavier A. Torres de Janon





submitted by
connie hildreth



photo from welcome back to childhood event (cheese stick on top of iPhone)

submitted by jesse ide

print: m

print: m

print: m Submitted by Rachel Ithen

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m I was seconds away from pressing "post" when I had typed this up in my

print: m

print: m facebook status box originally, but I decided to submit it to the Omen

print: m

print: m instead. I like to be a positive and optimistic person whenever

print: m

print: m possible (or at least I'd like to make other people think so, because

print: m

print: m I'd like to think optimism is contagious), but sometimes you just

print: m

print: m gotta vent.

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m –

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m

print: m Two weeks ago I returned two books to the library, but as of a few

print: m

print: m days ago I checked to see it said I still have one checked out. After

print: m

print: m being told "come back tomorrow" twice, finally I got an answer today.

print: m

print: m The answer? If it somehow missed being checked in at Hampshire, and

print: m

print: m somehow missed being checked in at Amherst (where it was originally

print: m

print: m taken from), then chances are... it's hidden in my room somewhere.

print: m

print: m Even though I am completely certain I returned it, because I returned

print: m

print: m it with another book on the same topic and I didn't need either

print: m

print: m anymore, and even though I just cleaned my entire room yesterday to

print: m

print: m prepare for guests, apparently it's invisible and hiding here. And the

print: m

print: m default charge for books that can't be located? Eighty dollars. Eighty

print: m

print: m dollars for a mistake that one of the student library employees may

print: m

print: m have made. Eighty dollars for something misplaced... by someone, or

print: m

print: m some school, other than myself. Eighty dollars for a book I can get

print: m

print: m used on amazon for FIFTY-FOUR CENTS. I literally can do nothing in

print: m

print: m

this situation except pay up. There's no arguing, there's no defending

myself, because what proof do I have? Crapola. I have given so much

money (read: my PARENTS have given so much money) to this school, and

I'm not even talking about tuition or meal plans or things we have

agreed to pay. In the long run I may look back and think "eighty

bucks? psh, that's nothing" but when you're 2 months away from

graduating with a craption of student loans, and when you're Rachel

Ithen and just seeing how much groceries cost each week leaves you

feeling nervous, you don't like knowing that eighty bucks has gone

down the drain.

Most of you reading this probably think I'm overreacting and whining

about such a small issue in the grand scheme of things. But it

frustrates me that this was literally completely out of my control and

now I have to pay Amherst College (who rejected me when I applied

there btw so this feels extra lovely) eighty dollars for a book I know

I returned.

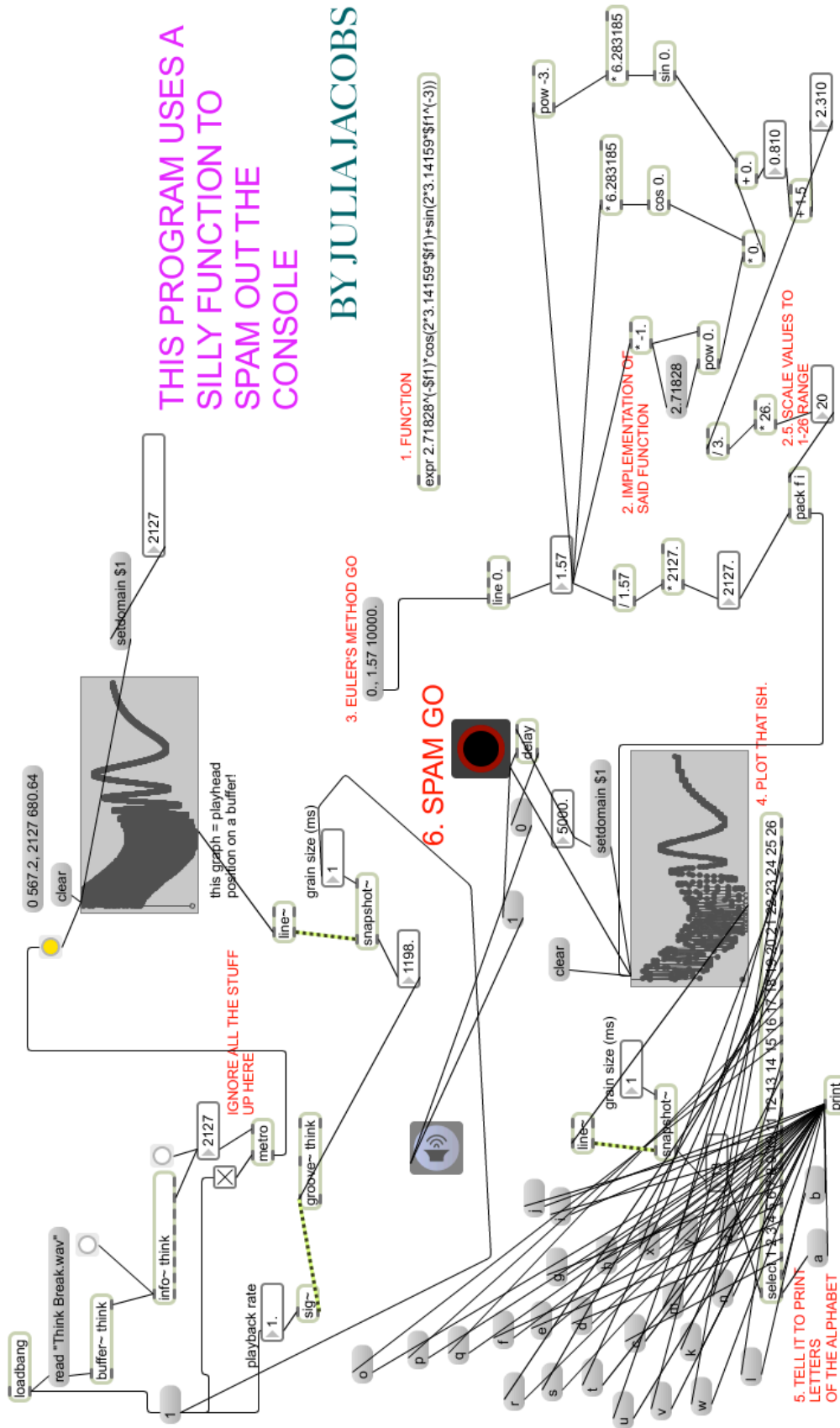
I hope in the process of my returning the book, someone stole it and

read it and fell in love with the history of Ralph Fasanella and

started reading about the Spanish Civil War and went on a crusade to

inform the world of this hidden history.

It's the least they could do for eighty fucking dollars.

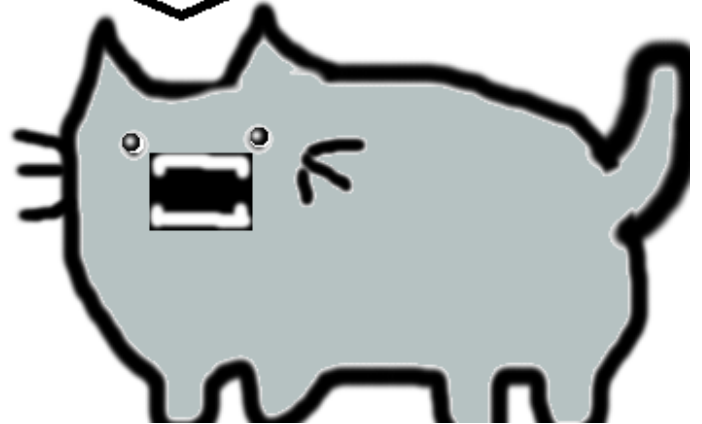


ΛΙΕΣ

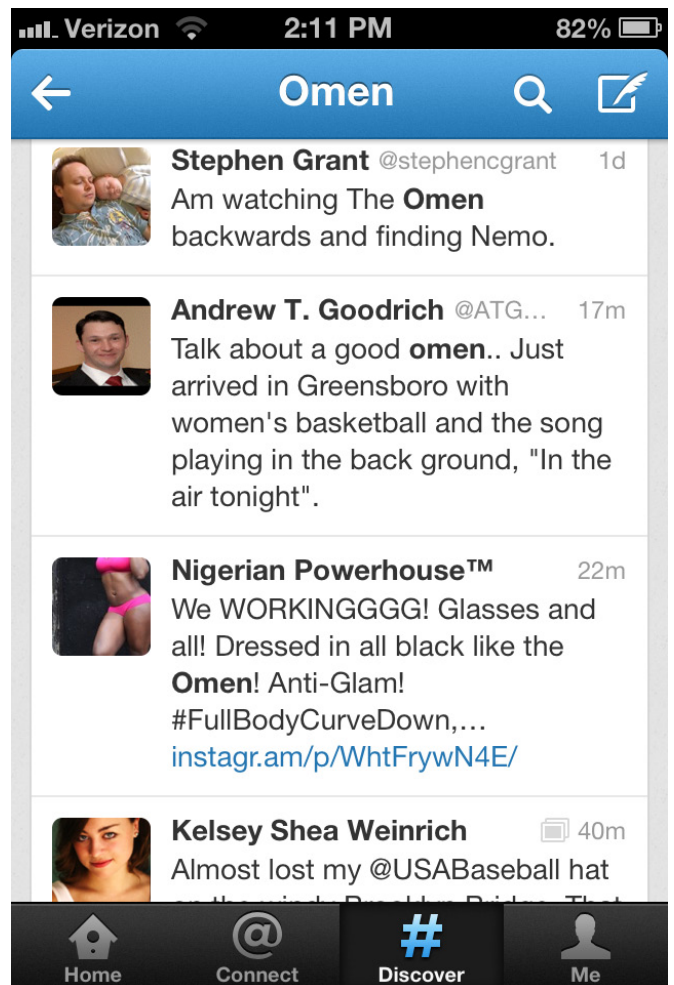
LIES LIES

IM GONNA POP
SOME TAGS

IVE GOT 20 \$ IN MY
POCKET



Cara Iacaponi "Artistic Representation of My Soul"



in complexity, until I have the wispy image of a dragon suspended in the air in front of me. A sexy smirk pulls at the corners of my mouth as I let the remnants of smoke curl out from my sexily flared nostrils. If I was paying any attention at all to the other bar/lounge patrons at this moment, I would notice that they are all murmuring, “That Sara is so hot right now. ... Sara.”

My sexy alone time comes to an end, however, when a stylish youth takes a seat opposite me and languidly drapes his arms across the back of the couch. His ensemble seems to consist primarily of leather, though it still appears soft to the touch and pliable to the flex of muscle that no doubt lies beneath. It is only when my eyes fall on his hair, that hair that could just as easily look effortless brushed back as swept forward, that I know precisely who I have encountered—one Justin Drew Bieber.

While I have been known to tap my toe to a handful of his pop hits on occasion, and perhaps even take a mild interest in his touring schedule and his mastery of the art of swag, I am a glamorous stranger who does not derive much amusement from trifling with starstruck behavior. So, I allow him to engage me in general smalltalk, both of us maintaining an easy kind of levity usually only known to old companions. I make sure to meet his eyes frequently and in a friendly manner, as it is the polite thing to do and I personally believe that only the best listener knows the speaker’s exact eye color.

As our conversation progresses and grows more intimate, we both lean forward, Justin abandoning his original posture of feigned nonchalance. I feel another set of eyes on me. I glance, only for a moment, in the direction of this sensation and I am greeted with the full force of Selena Gomez’s piercing glare from her place at the bar. Her magenta dress is a cascade of too many ruffles that hangs lifelessly on her delicate frame. I quickly turn away, mentally justifying my position between these two celebrated teen idols. Our little chat is nothing if not innocent, and Ms. Gomez could have easily accompanied Justin over to the couch area. She chose to keep her distance, the cold little thing that she is.

When the time finally comes for me to go—I have received a text from my friends inviting me to what is most likely a hipper and sexier party than whatever this bar/lounge solely populated by chart-topping pop stars has to offer—I stand and walk around the coffee table to shake Justin’s hand farewell, in a gracious gesture meant to indicate the clearly lasting friendship we have just established. However, my composure is tested when the atmosphere takes a turn for the heady and Justin reaches out and grips my upper arm with considerable

That Time I Had A Sexy Dream About Justin Bieber

I am sitting in a swanky bar/lounge type place in an even swankier hotel/resort type place on an island somewhere in the tropics where the majority of the population most likely leads a markedly less than swanky lifestyle. I am a smoker (something I never am). Although my body odor is on point, my hair is slightly disheveled and I am clearly a bit underdressed for the setting (something I always am). The couch on which I find myself is white, smooth, and low to the ground. An identical couch faces it from across the equally low and smooth glass coffee table. Faint yet entrancing house music pulses through the room.

I take a drag from my cigarette and blow a perfect ring of smoke. As I sit there, casually smoking and casually enjoying my own company like the glamorous stranger I truly am in my mind’s eye*, the shapes I exhale increase

force, resolution, and ... something else entirely. To prevent me even further from taking my leave, he pulls me closer to him and his eyes catch mine for what feels like the first time that whole evening, though I know this to be false. This briefest moment of eye contact is his way of asking for permission, for as quickly as it starts, it ends and his lips collide with my own and I am engulfed in a fiery makeout session with Justin Bieber and I can feel my glamorous and sexy and casual aura slipping away from me.

We break apart, breathing heavily—and sexily. I glamorously stutter once, searching for the right words. He sees my nonchalant incoherence and simply tells me that he was really enjoying our conversation, and that he would like it to continue ... elsewhere. I look to the bar, but find Ms. Gomez’s stool empty. We are free of prying eyes and I feel no pressure to decide quickly from Justin. His grasp on my arm has relaxed and changed from something authoritative to something comforting. As I weigh the options before me, the sounds of a street far from the tropics begins to rise. A car alarm brings me to my senses completely. I roll over in my bed, pulling the sheet over my head, squeezing my eyes shut tight, but to no avail. The bar/lounge type place is gone. My casual and sexy

[illegible]

cigarette is gone. Justin is gone. And I am awake.

*Full disclosure: I wrote this in a pair of sweatpants that I have owned since my freshman year of high school and all I have eaten today is Honey Bunches of Oats.

^Sara Coughlin

Pirates of the Pearl Oceans

(Thrilling) Conclusion

Characters

Captain "Bloodshot" Tybalt—Human Ex-Cleric 3/Fighter 2/Ur Priest 10/

Hierophant 1 (Max)

Meld Seawalker (Aka: Five)—Warforged Monk 8/Soul Eater 7/Wizard 1 (Nathan)

Mal Zerics—Human Cleric 5/Cardinal of Asmodeus 10 (Lucas)

Draken—Elf (Warped) Warlock 15 (Azriel)

Finny—Elf Bard 8/Virtuoso 6 (Poette)

Annabelle Niallo—Human (Quarter Elf) Aristocrat 15

Aramil Niallo—Half-Elf Rogue 13/Honorable Pirate 2 (Formerly Max)

Elizabeth Darshana—Human Scout 3/Barbarian 1/Martial Ranger 11

Dita Vantallion—Human “Wizard” 6

Tzzt—Dromite Telepath 15

Susan—Human Expert (Legal Affairs Consultant) 2

Fujitsu—Elf (Half Construct) Expert 7/Artificer 10

Braivis—Cybernetic Construct N/A

Markus Fen—Human Warmage 13/Marshal 2 (Formerly Lucas)

Durdek—Dwarf Wizard 8

Koshnak Roiruk—Orc Thug 8/Barbarian (Brawler) 5

Dora Quickpaw—Tibbit Sorceress 6 (Formerly Max)

Cixelsid—Dromite Rogue 10/God of Traps and Trickery 99999 (My younger brother

(I wrote this masterpiece in a single day, and shall nary alter its glorious contents! However, I will be adding footnotes to... increase its comprehensibility... hopefully?)

From a Vision of a Medieval Christian Mystic

"After that he came himself to me, took me entirely in his arms, and pressed me to him; and all my members felt his in full felicity, in accordance with the desire of my heart and my humanity. So I was outwardly satisfied and transported. Also then, for a short while, I had the strength to bear this; but soon, after a short time, I lost that manly beauty outwardly in the sight of his form. I saw him completely come to nought and so fade and all at once dissolve that I could no longer recognize or perceive him outside me, and I could no longer distinguish him within me. Then it was to me as if we were one without difference."

Hadewijch. "Visions." In Hadewijch, *The Complete Works*, edited by Mother Columbia Hart, 259–306. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1980. 281.

Submitted by Ian Sloan

He found her on the ruined city streets, near the fallen avatar of Giygas the Dark One. She stood on the breastplate of an incapacitated blackguard of Bael, taunting him.

"Oh, Tybalt." Elizabeth turned, swinging idly the bloody blade in her offhand.

"Have you found the father yet?"

"Yeah, I've got him." Tybalt glanced sidelong at the battle raging down the street. Incartu leapt between areas of cover as Gyroid security forces laid down desperate suppressive fire. "We need to get to the caves, fast. Let me heal you..."

Tybolt extending a hand wreathed in negative energy. Elizabeth spotted the ruse only moments before the spell touched her. She retaliated with an eviscerating slash, one that for a moment looked instantly fatal. Tybolt cursed, ready to wake up in his spare body below the city, but to his astonishment his magically augmented vitality held together.

The negative energy surged through Elizabeth, and she staggered. The two powerful humans looked at each other for several seconds, both barely clinging to consciousness. Then the dromite, Tzst, popped up from his perch on Tybalt's back and emitted a telepathic pulse that rendered the weakened woman unconscious.

Tybolt knelt down, opened his bag of holding, and hoisted her into it. Inside the bag, a woman and an elderly half-elf were sharing a Bottle of Air.

"No mistakes this time." Tybalt called down to Annabelle . "This is really your mother?"

Annabelle nodded gravely.

"Tie her up." Tybalt instructed. "Annabelle, why did you lie to me before?"

She paused for a moment. "I didn't want to be a slave."

Tybal looked her in the eye. He was doing the right thing, wasn't he? Better that he controlled her and the power she channeled than someone or something else... No. It didn't matter. Right or wrong, he was a pirate, and the greatest treasure imaginable was his for the taking. He had all the pieces, now.

(Gygas was Lucas's Blackguard from the original Pearl Oceans campaign. Yes, as in an evil knight—Devotee of Bael, Lord of the first layer of hell—parading about in full plate armor trying to navigate a swashbuckling island adventure. He was somewhat out of his element.

One of the two races of aliens introduced to the region by an interplanar portal many years ago. As an aspiring science fiction writer, I used to throw aliens in with everything.

The Gyroid Sect is a secretive organization with access to advanced technology. Because Max wanted more Final Fantasy 7 in his DnD, I guess.

Annabel led Captain Tybalt and his crew on several wild goose chases before coughing up her mother's real identity. His fault for expecting a living MacGuffin to be cooperative.

) Towering above the city, Meld marshaled the remaining Titanforged. With Dita piloting Unit 1—an admittedly terrifying prospect—he'd been able to receive the titan scaled flight spell he needed to take down the fiendish, winged avatar whose dark lances had incapacitated Unit 2 and killed its pilot.

Now, a new divine avatar flitted through the city, a figure in a billowing brown cloak, perhaps half Meld's own Titanforged proportions and floating at eye level. He thought he could glimpse a grinning face with insectoid features beneath its hood—a dromite.

Cixelsid.

"Come." Meld said. "Let us reason."

Cixelsid's avatar faded into a sphere of prismatic energy then burrowed through several buildings, leaving behind cleanly vaporized holes. The sphere then melded back into the form of the cloaked dromite. It spoke in a nasally voice, "But I'm just having fun!"

Meld swung fast and hard, planting his fist square in the cackling avatar's temple. He expected to send the monster reeling, but there was no impact—his fist disintegrated up to the wrist. Meld jerked his arm back.

"Don't touch it!" Eegum, the extraplanar expert in the Gyroid control room, shouted through the voice link. "The avatar is being projected from an alternate reality, it only exists in our prime as destructive energy."

The avatar took its prismatic form again, racing around Meld. He quickly moved to interpose himself again between it and the access chute.

"I'm not letting you past."

"Well." Came the nasally reply. "I'll go right through you."

Meld reared back. A thousand sentient souls, drained into his composite body in the course of his uncounted decades spend wandering, coalesced at the mouth of his titanic body.

"SOUL... BLAST!!!"

Tybalt was running through the street, below, when the pillar of energy struck.

A shower of glass rained down on him as Cixelsid's avatar crashed through the building on his right side and then slammed into the one on his left. As the avatar passed by above him, its dromite-shaped form melted away, leaving only the prismatic core embedded in a structure a couple of blocks away.

A skyscraper-sized warforged (living construct) deployed from the underbelly of the Gyroid capital of Blackmoor. Any resemblance to Neon Genesis Evangelion is entirely coincidental.

Dita isn't actually a wizard; she just thinks she's one.

Nathan's character, Meld, got a daily ability called Soul Blast from his levels in Soul Eater. Instead of actually using it throughout a summer's worth of adventures, he said "I'm saving it up." I was like "sure, why not?"

"The avatar is stunned." Dr. Fujitsu, mother of the Titanforged project, reported from the control room. "It looks like it will take some time to reawaken, but I can't calculate exactly how long."

Behind Meld, Unit 1 was careening about, tripping over the crumbling commercial district of Blackmoor.

"Get Finny back into Unit 1's cockpit." Meld said. Though excitable, the Dread Pirate Tybalt's former first mate was more competent than young Dita by an uncontestable margin.

"He's waiting in the hanger." Fujitsu replied. "I'm retracting the deployment elevator now."

Seeing Unit 1 being lowered into the city's underbelly, Tybalt sprinted to the

deployment chute and dropped down onto the receding platform. Sitting with his weary back to Unit 1's heel, he checked the contents of his bag of holding: One aged half-elf rogue; one middle aged, quarter-elf lady; and the trussed up, unconscious woman whose proficiency with a blade had impressed the deadly Inapertu Clan incartu.

"How do my wounds look?" He asked Tztt, mildly.

Tybalt felt the Dromite's familiar telepathic presence in his mind. "I sense much pain Tztt. See Much blood Tztt. Damn it, I'm a psion Tztt not a doctor!"

"While we're here, Aramil," Tybalt addressed the half-elf in the bag, "I'm curious... How did you and Elizabeth... you know?"

"Forty years ago, looking to escape the Gyroid Sect that had given me my abilities, I joined the crew of the legendary pirate Sam Truss. We were escorting researchers from the academy of Caru through the western islands; they were compiling a codex on the Pearl Oceans. Elizabeth was with them, a fiery lass even in her youth. I taught her to use a sword, in the course of Truss's voyage."

Tybalt glanced at the gaping wound in his gut. Aramil continued.

"We were attacked by incartu, she and a few other researchers were captured. As I gather, the others didn't make it, but Elizabeth's tenacity impressed the incartu. When I saw her again, a month later, she was one of them: aiding the incartu in their attempt to overcome Truss's crew and beat us to the Helm of the Forgotten Deity."

The elevator reached the Titanforged hangar. Tztt clambered back onto Tybalt's back, and the Ur Priest slipped away into the towering room's peripheral clutter. He made his way through the gaping hole that'd been torn in the hangar's wall, and down into the rocky cavern below Blackmoor. The ruined

(Poette's character, Finny, is based on Flapjack. He was adorable, and his gruesome death halfway through was devastating... he got better.

I apologize in advance for Tztt's verbal tick. It even annoys me.

Sam Truss, Nathan's character in the original Pearl Oceans campaign, was a multiclass ninja/pirate. Yes. Seven levels of each. It worked out surprisingly well. He once killed a fiendish plesiosaur by attacking the inside of its neck with a magic ring while being swallowed by it. Also, Giygwas was the plesiosaur. Long story.

) body of Unit 3 still lay at the bottom. Unit 3 had been possessed by Cixelsid before the siege began, and had attempted to burrow into location Oh. Meld had barely managed to intervene in time.

"You've read the history books. You know Giygwas and Truss had their final battle there—ending with Truss dead and Giygwas mortally wounded. In the end, I was racing the incartu through the same caves you're now approaching."

Tybalt summoned an earth elemental to clear the rubble that filled the cave's entrance. He slipped in, and then ordered the elemental to replace the rubble.

"And as Elizabeth and I crossed blades mere yards from the entrance to the final chamber, Cixelsid rushed past us to claim the Helm's power for himself. That day Cixelsid ascended to godhood; she and I watched. With the Helm claimed, we had no further reason to fight each other. We survivors made our peace—and that's how Annabelle was conceived."

The deployment elevator descended a second time, bringing Meld down into the hanger. As he reached ground level, Unit 1 was docking into its recess so that its pilot could be changed.

Meld strode out into the cavern, making for the brutalized form of Unit 3.

"I need a new hand." He explained.

Tearing Unit 3's hand away and placing it to his own stump, Meld used his repair nanites to fuse the metal. It took longer than it normally would have, his nanites were sluggish after he expended his soul energy.

"A second wave of avatars approach." Unit 4's telepathically enhanced tremor

The Omen · Vol. 40, #5

spoke through the Titanforged voice link.

"Copy, Four," Fujitsu said, "Looks like we'll have about ten minutes to swap the pilots and get Five repaired."

Meld flexed the new hand, made a fist to confirm its mechanical responsiveness.

"I'm ready."

Below him, Tybalt raced through the same caves of annulled magic that Aramil had traversed forty years ago during the quest for the Helm. He felt faint, aware he pushed himself further than his ailing body ought to go... but too much rested on this to let up.

Reaching the chamber—Location OH—Tybalt spilled the contents of his Bag of Holding out onto the floor.

"Move her over there." Tybalt pointed to the bound and unconscious Elizabeth, and then to the marked place on the floor where the ritual needed her essence to stand.

"Then both of you take up your positions."

(Captain Truss was a housecat at the time. Long story.

They're tiny robots powered by devouring souls. Makes perfect sense.

)

Aramil sat down across from Elizabeth. Annabelle clambered up onto the altar that had once held the Helm.

Now I just have to concentrate, Tybalt thought to himself, before That Guy arrives in the elevator.

"There's another mind Tztt in this room."

In the corner of the room hid Meld's octopus familiar, an immensely durable sea creature with an uncanny knack for predicting the outcome of sporting events .

And it was... trying to steal the ultimate power for itself! Tztt dropped down from Tybalt's back, rushed over to it, and began hitting it with his stick in order to break its concentration.

"Thank the good-for-nothing gods," Tybalt muttered to himself, "no octopus should ever be given that sort of power."

He closed his eyes then, beginning the ritual to bind the facet—Annabelle—forever to his own will. The sound of the elevator interrupted him.

In the freight elevator hunched a bald man in a business suit. The giant easily stood twelve feet tall when fully upright.

"Braivis." Tybalt and Aramil said together.

Gods be damned. Tybalt had taken too long, and now the High Executive of the Gyroid Sect was here to kick his sorry Ur Priest ass.

"You two don't have to fight," an entreating voice issued from the woman at Braivis's side.

"Susan?" Tybalt said, opening his eyes. "Which one of you is it?"

"It's me... the Susan you resurrected. The other disappeared... There wasn't anything I could do."

"Perhaps it's for the best. I couldn't have been with both of you."

"Ahem." Braivis cleared his throat. "There are more important matters at hand."

"Tybalt." Susan said. "I love you. I really do... But you must know you're not the one meant to possess this power. You're a free spirit... we need someone like Braivis to protect the world."

(Max and his characters have always had a very... special relationship with Braivis of the Gyroid Sect.

Nathan took a level of wizard, gained a familiar named Paul, and then pointed out that since familiars have half the hit points of their master (usually a frail wizard guy) it was in fact half as tough as a skyscraper-sized robot. Hilarity ensued.

There are two Susans due to Cixelsid's soul-cloning shenanigans. Oh, also Susan is Tybalt's love interest, but it's complicated because she works for the Gyroid Sect and he bitterly resents them (but pretended to work for them too). That's grade-A fantasy romance material, right?)

"You have no idea how far I've gone..." said Braivis, "Forty years ago, before I was the High Executive, I led the strike team into these caves to retrieve the Helm. I fought monsters—aliens, fiends—and I spilled my blood alongside my men in these tunnels."

Braivis looked in the direction of the old half-elf in the ritual circle. "That rogue over there managed to knock me into a pit of stalagmites. Afterwards, healers were unable to repair me due to the magic annulling nature of the rocks that had skewered me. That's how I ended up in this robotic body..." Tybalt reached weakly for his sword. He knew he was outmatched here.

As he'd learned painfully in their previous encounters, Braivis's body was impervious to all forms of magic. It could only be destroyed through force of arms... and as he bled out from the wound Elizabeth had dealt him earlier, Tybalt knew he hadn't the chance of a snowball at the outskirts of the City of Brass .

"After everything I gave up for it, I deserve this power. Now." Braivis place his thumb and index finger gently on either side of Susan's neck. "If you don't want to lose another Susan, I'd suggest you slowly step away from the control circle and avoid making any sudden, divine gestures.

Tybalt steeled himself. He could not back down, could not let Braivis win...

In the corner, a cephalopod's brain exploded. "I got it, Tztt."

Up above, Meld registered the mental pang of his familiar being killed. He spoke into the voice link: "Something's going on in Location OH. Ready a proxy for me."

"Good job, Tztt," said Tybalt, glancing in the direction of the climactic dromite/octopus duel "that's one problem taken care of."

"Yes, Tztt," the dromite said gleefully. He hopped in the air and planted one of his mottled hands on Tybalt's brow. The Ur Priest felt a numbness coming over him. "And that's Tztt two."

Tybalt tried to strangle the little creature, but found his hands would not obey him. Though still in control of his body, he could not willfully direct harm upon the traitorous psion.

"Ha ha ha." Braivis adjusted his cramped position in the elevator to accommodate his deep laughter. "You've done well, little dromite. Your assistance will be rewarded when I've claimed this place's power."

"You?" Tztt turned his beady dromite eyes in Braivis's direction. "Do you think I've forgotten Tztt what you did to me? Did you really think Tztt you could wipe the mind of Tztt the world's greatest telepath? I have numerous Tztt memory backups throughout the Tztt city."

"How..." asked Tybalt, weakly.

(Capital city of the Elemental Plane of Fire. Tybalt is well read that way.)

"Three weeks ago Tztt when you allowed me to operate Tztt on your mind Tztt I installed a telepathic imperative... into you and your Tztt spare body..."

"Enough of this." Braivis said. "Tztt, if you truly retain the memories of your capture, then you remember that I—a construct—am immune to your telepathy. You can't possibly hope to fight me."

Reaching for his gun, Braivis began to extricate himself from the freight elevator. As he did so, however, the doors closed upon him. Susan, her eyes glazed over, had thrown the emergency switch to recall the elevator.

"Tybalt Tztt was not the only mind Tztt I had occasion to alter."

Tybalt looked Susan in the eyes as the doors shut. Two days ago, he'd drugged her during their date at the Way of the Samurai oriental restaurant... so that Tztt could probe her mind for the coordinates of Location OH. "I'm so sorry,

Susan..."

Braivis raged, slamming his fists against the reinforced elevator doors. Tzzt laughed. Aramil and Annabelle sat in their places, gazing away with the vacant stare of the psionically dominated.

Tybalt tried his hardest to concentrate, to perform the ritual, but found the imperative implanted in his brain made him incapable of doing so.

"There'll be time Tzzt to finish this before Braivis Tzzt returns."

Tzzt walked over to the control circle, and began to concentrate.

"It's fitting Tzzt that a dromite should win Tzzt again."

In his human-sized proxy body, Meld laced on the Boots of Teleportation he'd acquired the previous day and donned the tattered cloak. This raiment had been stored in the Gyroid's vault on Feyra for decades: the cloak that Cixelsid wore on the day of his ascension. This artifact provided immunity to the terrible curse that stifled teleportation within the realm of the Pearl Oceans. Meld activated the boots and visualized Location OH.

Concussive telekinetic force met Meld upon his arrival. Tzzt, turning away from the ritual at hand, slammed Meld into the opposite wall of the chamber with his mind.

"I won't Tzzt be stopped."

(Previously, Max initiated an elaborate gambit to dick over Lucas's character without leaving any trace of his own involvement... down to erasing his character's own memories with Tzzt's help. It was pretty hilarious... but who's laughing now?)

DM advice #1208: Got to keep an eye on those little insect dudes. Always be stealing ultimate power and whatnot.)

This body felt so weak. Meld's original form had been built into Unit 5; this proxy he projected himself into now was just a puppet, an afterthought. He felt its internal components being slowly crushed.

A hunched over, elderly woman plodded into the room. Tybalt recognized her immediately from Susan's description—she was the apparition that had appeared when Susan died, and then subsequently taken Susan away to Cixelsid's parallel reality to be part of his sadistic games.

"It's your time, deary..."

Those chilling words, a summons to doom in a sugary tone. Meld had seen this apparition before with his own eyes, when she came to claim a Gyroid soldier that he'd killed and impersonated. She'd said those very words to the soldiers before Meld struck the fatal blow.

Was his time up? No. The hag wasn't speaking to him... she addressed the dromite.

"What are you, Tzzt?" Tzzt turned towards her, backing away. "I can't sense a mind Tzzt!"

That's when Annabelle drew Tybalt's sword from its sheath and brought it down savagely across the back of Tzzt's head. The old woman smiled sweetly as the dromite fell shuddering at her feet, with a blade buried in his skull.

"I've changed hands uncountable times over the decades," Annabelle said as she jerked the sword out of the psion, "I've been subjected to mental influence and mind control on dozens of dozens of occasions. I've gotten very good at resisting it—and very good at pretending otherwise."

She handed Tybalt back his weapon. "Bit of advice, Tybalt: never give anyone free reign to edit your mind, no matter how nice they seem."

Meld's crushed proxy body fell to the chamber floor with a resounding clang.

"I'd gotten too used to thinking of you as just another piece of treasure..." Tybalt told Annabelle.

"Father, you ok?" Annabelle asked Aramil. The Half-elf nodded.

Having put his sword away, Tybalt stepped back into the control circle. "...now, be a good little treasure piece and get back on the altar."

Aramil kissed his daughter on the forehead. She walked back to her place in the

center of the chamber.

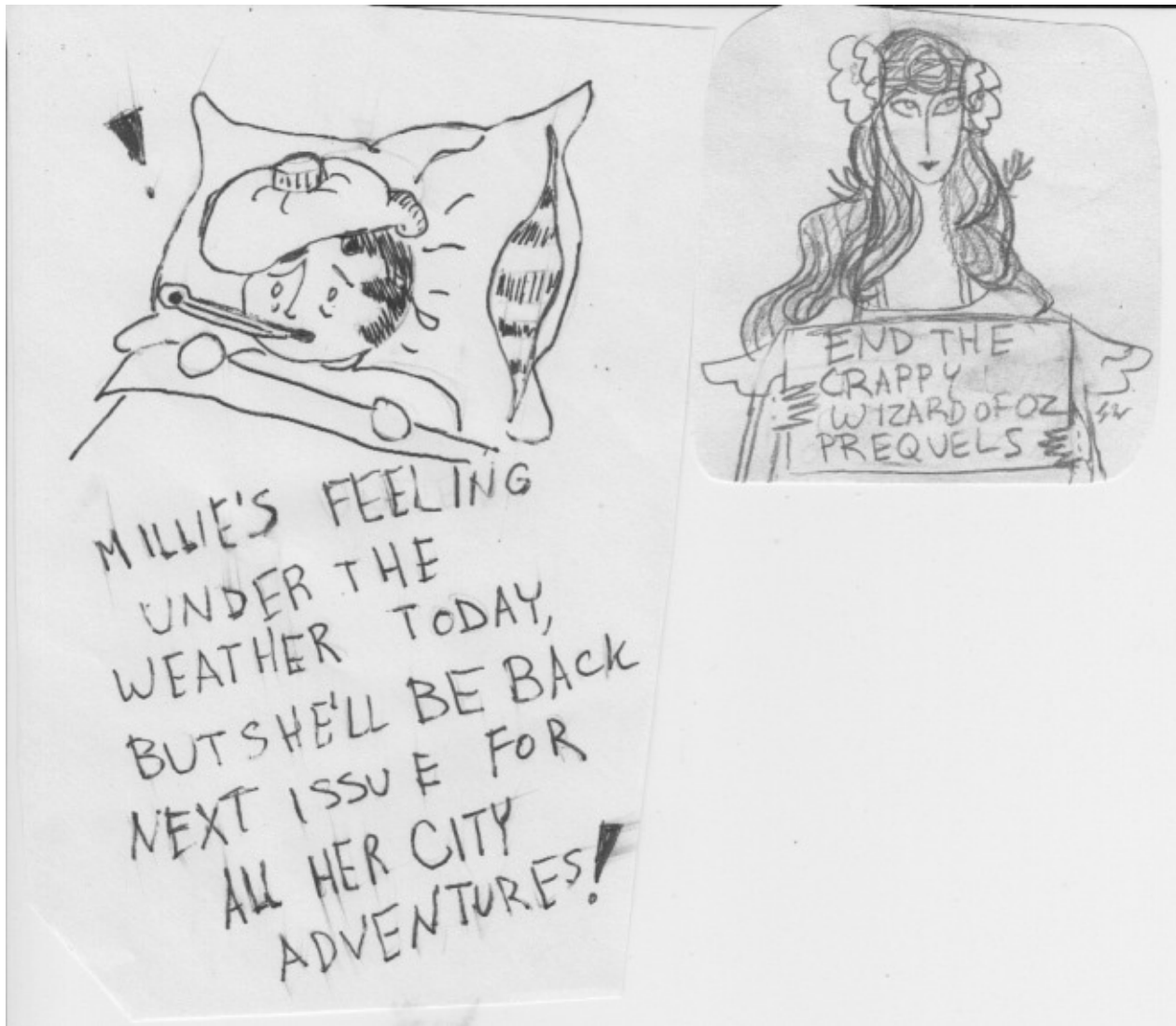
Up above, Meld wrestled at titan scale with an anthropomorphized baleen whale that had broken into the undercity. An avatar of the whale mother, perhaps? He could no longer keep track.

When his blows had drained away the last of its soul energy, he threw it down alongside Unit 3—he'd barricade the cave entrance with the corpses of fallen giants—and projected himself back into his proxy.

(Did my absolute creepiest voice with her. Gave my players jitters.

DM advice #327: never let your players talk you into letting their character be an anthropomorphic baleen whale. It will only end in tears.)

all this submitted by the wonderful Freya Crowe, however, it is not everything that she submitted! The full piece is 35 pages! Is'nt that really awesome?! We think it's so great that we're serializing it! The rest will be published in later issues! We promise! We also got her consent to do it like this so it's A-Okay! K? K! -Jesse Ide



GRACE WILEY!!!!!!